

Exhibition in Parliament celebrates Women and the Vote



Curators installing the Women and the Vote exhibition in the Houses of Parliament
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The Houses of Parliament are celebrating International Women's Day with a display of historic documents charting British women's fight for the vote. The items in the display - **Women and the Vote: The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain 1865-1928** - are drawn from the collections of The Women's Library at London Metropolitan University and The Parliamentary Archives. They will be in the Royal Gallery, House of Lords until Saturday 10 March, to mark the 101st International Women's Day on Thursday 8 March.

The eight items in the display document the history of the women's movement from the 1860s to the achievement of female suffrage on the same term as male in 1928. The collection was added to the globally-recognised UNESCO UK Memory of the World register in 2011.

The documents begin with the 1866 Petition which enabled John Stuart Mill to be the first person in Parliament to call for women's suffrage; and end with the success of the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928. The collection contains a congratulatory letter from the Prime Minister to the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies – and founder of The Women's Library – Millicent Fawcett.

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Exhibition in Parliament celebrates Women and the Vote For immediate release, 1 March 2012

PRESS INFO: Sophie Scott at The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University 020 7320 1180 or sophie.scott@londonmet.ac.uk.

Lord Speaker, Baroness D'Souza, said:

"The Women and the Vote display is an excellent way to mark International Women's Day. Women make a major contribution not just in political life, but in every area of society. And this is largely possible thanks to the women who fought so hard for equal suffrage, one of the key events in British political history. This is a great opportunity to see these valuable documents up close and to take a moment to reflect on this historic achievement."

Director of Libraries for London Metropolitan University, Julie Howell said:

"We at The Women's Library are really excited to bring this historic collection of objects together for the first time in history, at the Houses of Parliament, where for many years women were excluded from participating. We really hope that Women and the Vote inspires all who see it, particularly MPs, as this really is a fantastic celebration of equality, where it counts, at the ballot box."

Clerk of the Records at the Parliamentary Archives, Caroline Shenton, said:

"The Parliamentary Archives is delighted to host this exhibition of our UNESCO-recognised women's suffrage documents. It is particularly exciting to display our Women's Freedom League banner, which was unfurled from the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Commons by suffragettes in 1908. Working with the Women's Library has been a great opportunity to bring this and our other archival documents about women and the vote to a wider audience."

From mid-March the objects will be returned to their usual homes at The Women's Library and at the Parliamentary Archives, where they are available free of charge for public viewing and research (subject to advance arrangement).

Find out more about visiting The Women's Library at London Metropolitan University:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/searchthecollections/>

Find out more about visiting The Parliamentary Archives:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/archives-practical/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- For press information and images please contact Sophie Scott at The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University on 020 7320 1180 or via sophie.scott@londonmet.ac.uk.
- Established in 1926, The Women's Library is an archive, museum and library housing one of the greatest collections of women's history in the world. It is part of London Metropolitan University, one of the foremost providers of undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and vocational education and training in Britain. More information at www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk
- The Parliamentary Archives is a shared service of Parliament, providing a records management and archives service to the administrations of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Archives holds several million historical records relating to Parliament, dating from 1497 and is usually open to the public all year round, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.00pm (apart from public holidays). For further information, please visit

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- UNESCO's Memory of the World programme was established in 1992 to promote preservation of and access to the world's archive holdings and library collections. The vision of the programme is a simple but powerful one – the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance.
- The UK Memory of the World Register was established in 2010 to highlight documentary heritage which holds cultural significance specific to the UK. The Register is managed by the UK Memory of the World Committee and complements the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register, which is a catalogue of documentary heritage of global significance and outstanding universal value. The 2011 UK Register is available at www.unesco.org.uk/2011_uk_memory_of_the_world_register.

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